

**R E M A R K S**

Reconsideration of this application, as amended, is respectfully requested.

**THE CLAIMS**

Claim 1 has been amended to clarify that the plurality of processing tanks being arranged in line with each other in one line, as well as to clarify that the transporting track is provided along the line of processing tanks. Claim 1 has also been amended to clarify that each of the first and second operating ranges extends at least from a first processing tank in the line of processing tanks to a last processing tank in the line of processing tanks, so as to include all of the processing tanks in the line.

Amended claim 1 is fully supported by the disclosure in the specification and drawings. See, for example, Figs. 5 and 8. See also, for example, the disclosure in the specification at page 15, lines 9-18.

Claim 20 has been amended to depend on claim 19.

No new matter has been added, and it is respectfully requested that the amendments to the claims be approved and entered.

#### THE PRIOR ART REJECTION

Claims 16-28 remain rejected under 35 USC 102 as being anticipated by previously cited "Kobayashi et al" (USP 6,772,029, US 2002/0192055 and WO 01/54187), and claims 29-35 remain rejected under 35 USC 103 as being obvious in view of the combination of Kobayashi et al and newly cited "Kimura et al" (USP 6,161,696). These rejections, however, are respectfully traversed with respect to the claims as set forth hereinabove.

Amended independent claim 1 even more clearly relates the structure of the plurality of processing tanks.

That is, according to amended independent claim 1, a plurality of processing tanks are provided for processing substrates and the plurality of processing tanks are arranged in line with each other in one line. In addition, according to amended independent claim 1, a transporting track provided along the line of processing tanks.

Still further, according to amended independent claim 1, a plurality of substrate transporting devices are provided for receiving, delivering and transporting the substrates, comprising: (A) a first substrate transporting device which is operable in a first operating range that extends at least from a first processing tank in the line of processing tanks to a last processing tank in the line of processing tanks, so as to include all of the processing tanks in the line, and (B) a second

substrate transporting device which is operable in a second operating range that extends at least from the first processing tank in the line of processing tanks to the last processing tank in the line of processing tanks, so as to include all of the processing tanks in the line.

Yet still further, according to amended independent claim 1, the first substrate transporting device and said second substrate transporting device are provided on the same transporting track, which extends along the line of processing tanks, such that when the second substrate transporting device is positioned at an  $n^{\text{th}}$  one of the processing tanks the first substrate transporting device is movable only up to an  $n-1^{\text{th}}$  one of the processing tanks which immediately precedes the  $n^{\text{th}}$  one of the processing tanks.

It is respectfully submitted that Kobayashi et al clearly does not disclose, teach or suggest this structure recited in amended independent claim 1.

In more detail, as apparently recognized by the Examiner, Kobayashi et al discloses a semiconductor fabrication apparatus using three transfer devices 1a, 1b, 1c to transfer substrates. The three transfer devices operate in ranges shown in Fig. 1 of Kobayashi et al.

As pointed out in the Advisory Action, transfer devices 1b and 1c of Kobayashi et al can both access temporary stage 3b and rough cleaning device 7. The Examiner asserts in the Advisory

Action that temporary stage 3b and rough cleaning device 7 can therefore be interpreted as first and last processing tanks, and the Examiner asserts that transfer devices 1b and 1c of Kobayashi et al can be interpreted as operating in first and second operating ranges in the manner of the substrate transporting devices recited in claim 1.

As more clearly recited in amended independent claim 1, the plurality of processing tanks being arranged in line with each other in one line. Moreover, as recited in claim 1, each of the first and second operating ranges extends at least from a first processing tank in the line of processing tanks to a last processing tank in the line of processing tanks, so as to include all of the processing tanks in the line. And according to amended independent claim 1, the first substrate transporting device and the second substrate transporting device are provided on the same transporting track, which extends along the line of processing tanks.

It is respectfully pointed out that temporary stage 3b and rough cleaning device 7 of Kobayashi et al are not in line with each other. And it is respectfully submitted, therefore, that these elements of Kobayashi et al clearly cannot be interpreted as a first and last processing tanks in a line of processing tanks as recited in amended independent claim 1.

Indeed, it is respectfully submitted that in the structure illustrated in Fig. 1 of Kobayashi et al, there are no two processing tanks in line with each other that are accessible by more than one of the transporting devices 1a-1c.

It is respectfully submitted, moreover, that Kobayashi et al therefore clearly does not disclose at least first and second substrate transporting devices provided on the same transporting track (that extends along the line of processing tanks) to be operable in the first and second operating ranges (each including all of a plurality of in-line processing tanks) as recited in claim 1, such that when the second substrate transporting device is positioned at an  $n^{\text{th}}$  one of the processing tanks the first substrate transporting device is movable only up to an  $n-1^{\text{th}}$  one of the processing tanks which immediately precedes the  $n^{\text{th}}$  one of the processing tanks.

Thus, it is respectfully submitted that Kobayashi et al clearly does not disclose the structure of the processing tanks, transporting track, and substrate transporting devices recited in amended independent claim 1.

And since Kobayashi et al does not disclose this structure of the present invention described above, it is respectfully submitted that Kobayashi et al also cannot disclose, teach or suggest a scheduler as recited in claim 16, which prepares scheduling data for controlling operations of the plurality of

substrate transporting devices, based on processing conditions and transporting conditions which are entered in advance, wherein when the scheduling data indicates that transportation of the substrates occurs at more than one of the processing tanks simultaneously, the scheduler checks whether it is possible for the transportation of the substrates at said more than one of the processing tanks to be shared among the plurality of substrate transporting devices; and wherein when it is possible for the transportation of the substrates to be shared the scheduling data prepared by the scheduler is confirmed and the operations of the plurality of substrate transporting devices are controlled based on the scheduling data, and when it is not possible for the transportation of the substrates to be shared a timing of loading substrates before processing at the processing tanks is changed.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that amended independent claim 16 clearly recites structural features that are not disclosed, taught or suggested by Kobayashi et al, and it is respectfully submitted that claim 16, and claims 17-35 depending therefrom, all clearly patentably distinguish over Kobayashi et al singly or taken in combination with any of the other prior art of record under 35 USC 102 as well as under 35 USC 103.

RE: THE DEPENDENT CLAIMS

In the Advisory Action, the Examiner asserts "[t]he claims do not even require the apparatus to include any other tanks except for the referenced the first and the last tank [sic]." It is respectfully pointed out, however, that various dependent claims recite additional tanks and other structural features of the apparatus, including (but not limited to): one or more fastener washing tanks for washing a substrate fastener of at least one substrate transporting device (see, e.g., claims 18-20, 27, 28, 35); a buffer (see, e.g., claims 21-23, 33-35); and a drying tank (see, e.g., claims 24-28, 35).

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Entry of this Amendment, allowance of the claim and the passing of this application to issue are respectfully solicited.

If the Examiner has any comments, questions, objections or recommendations, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned for prompt action.

Respectfully submitted,

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